John Peterson House
County Route J
Joanna Vicinity
Ralls County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1209



PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. MO-1209

JOHN PETERSON HOUSE



Location: 0.25 mile north of the confluence of Indian Creek and the Salt River, 0.6 mile northwest of bridge where County Route J crosses the Salt River in Joanna, Ralls County, Missouri.

USGS Joanna 7-1/2' Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 15.613545.437770.

Present Owner: United States of America, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District (August 1978).

Present Use: Vacant. Located in the Clarence Cannon Dam and Reservoir Project Area.

Significance: The John Peterson House, built about 1918, is a late example of the use of traditional V-notch log construction in a dwelling. The house was later doubled in size by the addition of a frame section at one end.

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: circa 1918.

2. Architect/builder: Unknown. It is assumed that John Peterson built the house himself.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The John Peterson House is located in the southeast quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 16, Township 55 North, Range 7 West. The following references are from the deed books in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Ralls County Courthouse, New London, Missouri:

1917 Warranty Deed, March 6, 1917. Recorded in Book 99, page 423. John H. and Mary V. Stevenson to John Peterson. No acreage given. $800.

1919 Warranty Deed, December 19, 1919. Recorded in Book 108, page 19. John and Etta M. Peterson to William G. Vaughn. $1200. (A deed of trust upon the tract was made on March 9, 1917 between the Petersons and John H. Stevenson for $700. Possession under this deed was given March 1, 1920.)

1920 Trust Deed, November 20, 1920. Recorded in Book 95, page 502. Everett Spears and J. Hughes Powell were given a second deed of trust for $450 from William G. Vaughn. (On March 13, 1922, a default on the deed of trust of March 9, 1917 caused the land to be put up for public auction. The land was deeded back to Stevenson by Peterson for $650. Recorded in Book 106, page 591.)

1922 Warranty Deed, August 4, 1922. Recorded in Book 111, page 263. John H. and Mary Stevenson to J.G. Warren. 40 acres for $800.

1924 Warranty Deed, April 17, 1924. Recorded in Book 114, page 10. J.G. Warren to C.M. Sullivan. $600 (subject to deed of trust).

1924 Warranty Deed, May 12, 1924. Recorded in Book 114, page 28. Carrie G. and C.M. Sullivan to Charles V. Swofford. $600 (subject to deed of trust).

1924 Warranty Deed, December 11, 1924. Recorded in Book 114, page 308. Charles V. Swofford to William G. Hanawalt.

1926 Trust Deed, January 16, 1926. Recorded in Book 115, page 208. Roy B. Meriwether to William C. and Elpha Hanawalt. 120 acres for $1100. (A loan of $1100 was made to the Hanawalts by Vallie Utterback).

1931 Trust Deed, August 26, 1931. Recorded in Miscellaneous Record Book 123, page 176. (A public auction was held and the tract was transferred from the Hanawalts to Vallie Utterback for $1000).

1943 Warranty Deed, November 1, 1943. Recorded in Book 141, page 305. Vallie Utterback to Charles S. and Edna Howald. $1.

1951 Warranty Deed, September 12, 1951. Recorded in Book 151, page 303. Charles and Edna Howald to Russell L. and Elizabeth Dreon. $1.

1958 Warranty Deed, November 20, 1958. Recorded in Book 162, page 84. Russell L. Dreon to C. Ray Anderson and Howard Shirley. $1.

1967 Warranty Deed, April 12, 1967. Recorded in Easement Record Book 176, page 355. C. Ray and Ruth Anderson and Howard and Mary Shirley to the United States of America. $8500.

4. Original construction: The one-room-with-loft log section (northeast end) of the Peterson house is the original dwelling. Constructed of hewn logs, the structure rests on a limestone slab foundation. There are heavy framed doors on the southwest and northeast sides with windows on the remaining two sides. A staircase in the south corner leads to the loft. Attempts to define the historical and ethnic background of the structural type found in the Peterson House have been inconclusive. Henning believes that the V-notching indicates Norwegian-American construction, but he notes that no wooden peg system (bjonna) fastens the door and window openings, as in Scandinavian examples.

5. Alterations and additions: The major addition is the frame section, built onto the southwest end of the house at an unknown date. Although log-and-frame houses were common among Scandinavians, structural evidence indicates that the two sections of the Peterson House were built separately. The frame section rests on a concrete foundation, while the log section is built on limestone slabs. Also, the frame section is not flush with the walls of the log building, and the frame section is constructed of milled pine lumber, while the log section is constructed of hewn oak timbers. Whitewashing at the point where the log walls meet the frame section shows that the southwest log wall (now an interior wall) was once exposed.

In the log section, the floorboards on the second floor have been removed. Lap siding has been added to the northeast gable, probably at the same time the frame section was constructed. Concrete daubing has been applied to the limestone foundation, possibly at the time the foundation concrete for the frame section was laid.

Additions to both sections include recent paneling in some locations, both inside and out; reframing of the opening between the two first-floor rooms; and the addition of asphalt shingling over earlier wood shingles.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the House:

Very little is known about John and Etta Peterson. Ms. Nellie Swift remembers the couple as people who "stayed pretty much to themselves." They were probably subsistence farmers. One Ralls County resident, Mrs. Ida Reynolds, remembers the Joanna Ridge people as a "rough crowd and outcasts--people who lived apart from the rest of society." Settlement on the ridge began as early as 1829, and this later became an area where workers who cut railroad ties lived.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: None located.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary Sources:

Henning, Dale R., "Cannon Reservoir: Mitigation of Historic Resources, Comments on Feasibility." Historic Resources Survey, University of Nebraska, Cannon Reservoir Human Ecology Project, 1977.

Hunt, Karen (Platz) and Michael J. O'Brien, "National Register Nomination Form: John Peterson House." February 1978. Copy in Washington, D.C., Office of the National Register includes 2 photos, taken January 3, 1977. Nomination prepared in conjunction with the Historic Resources Survey, University of Nebraska, Cannon Reservoir Human Ecology Project, 1977.

Reynolds, Mrs. Ida, Perry, Missouri. Personal interview, July 17, 1978.

Rouse, Okle V., Hannibal, Missouri. Personal interview, July 7, 1978.

Thede, Darwin, Pioneer Area Manager, Living History Farms. Personal interview, July 15, 1978.

b. Secondary Sources:

Mercer, Henry C., The Origin of Log Houses in the United States (Doylestown, Pennsylvania: Bucks County Historical Society, 1967).

Weslager, C.A., The Log Cabin in America, From Pioneer Days to the Present (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1969).

West, Dee Paul and Okle Rouse, The End of a Way of Life, the Fate of the Joanna People on the Salt River (Shelbyville, Missouri: Herald Publishing Company, ca. 1973).

Prepared by William T. Morgan
Architectural Historian
Historic American Buildings Survey
July 1978

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The John Peterson House is a one-story, double-pen structure, consisting of a log section and a frame section. It is a late example of a traditional cabin form--built in the second decade of the twentieth century.

2. Condition of fabric: Structural and exterior fabrics: Fair. Interior finish: Poor (extensively vandalized).

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Original section: 17'1" (one-bay front) by 14'10"
Frame addition: 14'3" (two-bay front) by 14'3".

2. Foundations:

Original section: Dry-laid limestone slabs set one or two high in a continuous perimeter wall.

Frame addition: Continuous concrete foundation walls.

3. Walls:

Original section: Hewn red oak logs, joined at the corners by hewn V-notches. The unevenness of the corner notches indicates lack of experience with log joinery. The spaces between the logs are chinked with limestone chips above the sill log and with wood wedges nailed into place in the joints above. Daubing is lime mortar with horsehair binder. An earlier whitewashing has all but washed off.

Frame section: Horizontal weatherboards. (This siding also covers the presumably original vertical planks in the gable of the log section.)

4. Structural system:

Original section: Horizontal log bearing walls, hewn to a thickness of approximately 7". The first story floor joists (8" logs with their tops hewn square) and second-story floor joists (logs hewn into sections approminately 3" x 7") penetrate the exterior walls through notches or mortises cut in the logs and are sawn flush with the log walls. Rafters are oak poles, 4" in diameter, which have been partially scraped.

Frame section: Milled pine lumber used for studs, joists, rafters, plates and collar ties. Wire nails are used throughout both sections of the house.

5. Porches: A concrete pad with an iron boot scrape is located at the door on the southeast wall of the frame section. A smaller pad is at the door on the northeast wall of the log section.

6. Chimneys: A single, plain brick stove chimney is located along the southwest wall of the original section, on the northwest slope of the roof. The chimney rests on a shelf above the second floor level, and flue holes on both sides indicate that it served stoves in the first-floor rooms of both the log and frame sections.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Two exterior doorways, one centered on the northeast face of the log section and one on the

southeast face of the frame section. Both doorways have plain casements with slip sills. Both doors have been removed. Cast-iron rimlock and hinge fragments found in the log section indicate types of hardware used.

b. Windows: The northwest and southeast walls of the log section had double hung windows centered in them and placed rather low on the first floor. The northwest face of the frame section had a double hung window centered on it, and a small window is located beside the doorway on the southeast face. Both gables have windows centered in them. All windows have plain board enframements, the ones in the log section being somewhat heavier. All sash has been removed.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: A single, moderately pitched gable covers both sections of the building. Earlier wood shingles are covered by asphalt shingles.

b. Cornices: The ends of the pole rafters on the original section have been left exposed. Cornices on the frame section are made of plain fascia boards.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The log section and frame section each has one room on the first floor, with exterior access, and one room on the level above.

2. Stairways: A steeply-pitched straight-run stair with a bottom landing runs along the southwest wall of the original section. The stair is narrow and constructed of circular-sawn oak boards. The outside stringer has been enclosed behind a gypsum board partition, forming a small closet space beneath the stair.

3. Flooring: In the first-floor rooms, flooring consists of 1" x 3-1/2" pine tongue-and-groove boards, blind-nailed and painted raw sienna. The floorboards have been removed from the loft of the log section. In the frame section they are 1" x 3-1/2" pine tongue-and-groove boards, as in the room below.

4. Wall and ceiling finish:

a. First floor: The interior log walls of the original section are hewn square and covered with whitewash. A subsequent layer of plasterboard is covered with paper,

plasterboard is covered with paper, and has in turn been painted. Interior walls in the frame addition are covered with plaster over sawn white pine lath. Finish of the plaster consists of an initial coat of blue calcimine covered by a number of layers of patterned wallpaper. The ceiling in the log section is the exposed undersides of the second-floor joists and floorboards, whitewashed and later painted. The ceiling in the frame addition is lath-and-plaster.

b. Loft: The walls and ceiling in the original log section are the undersides of the exposed rafters and roofing boards, all whitewashed. In the frame addition they are lath-and-plaster.

5. Doorways and doors: A cased opening is centered in the dividing wall between the two first-floor rooms. It has plain trim with a slight chamfer on the outside of the casings on the side toward the frame addition.

6. Decorative features and trim: The walls in both sections have 1" x 6" baseboards with shoes.

7. Mechanical systems: The log section shows evidence of surface-mounted electrical fixtures (now removed). Fixtures in the frame section (also removed) are flush mounted. The house was heated by stoves in the first-floor rooms in both sections. The building has no indoor plumbing.

D. Description of Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The John Peterson House faces northeast within a small clearing surrounded by sugar maples and large oaks along the heavily wooded Joanna Ridge. The old Florida-to-Joanna Road passes a few yards to the north of the house, and the Salt River lies to the south. The ridge on which the house sits runs east-west, forming rough, uneven terrain which falls off abruptly to the south and more gradually to the north.

2. Outbuildings: A rock-lined well is located immediately to the southeast of the house. A small frame shed is located to the southwest, and to the south are indications of a large barn. A privy was not found.

Prepared by Clayton B. Fraser
Project Supervisor
Historic American Buildings Survey
August 1978

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the St. Louis District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in compliance with Executive Order 11593, as a part of mitigation efforts connected with the construction of the Clarence Cannon Dam and Reservoir. HABS was engaged to document structures of cultural, historical, or architectural significance located within the Cannon Reservoir Project Area, in portions of Monroe and Ralls County, Missouri. The project was completed under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect. Recording was carried out during the summer of 1978 by Clayton B. Fraser, Project Supervisor; William T. Morgan (University of South Florida) and Travis C. McDonald (University of Virginia), Architectural Historians; Barbara A. Hendricks (University of Texas), Project Foreman; and Student Architects Dwight H. Burns (Texas Tech University), W. Michael Coppa (University of Virginia), Stephen H. Lauf (Temple University), and Michael K. Murdock (University of Texas). The data was edited in July 1979 by J.A. Chewning, Architectural Historian in the HABS Washington office. Photographs were taken by David J. Kaminsky in August 1978 and by William C. Haines between February and May 1979.